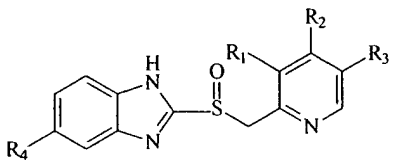
Amendments to the Claims

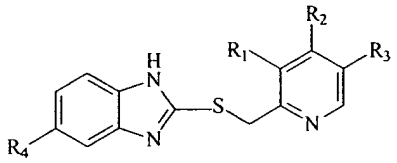
1-7. (canceled)

8. (currently amended) A process for preparing a thioester compound of formula A:



A

wherein R_1, R_2, and R_4 are each selected from the group consisting of hydrogen, substituted or unsubstituted lower alkyl and substituted or unsubstituted lower alkoxy; and R_3 is selected from the group consisting of hydrogen and substituted or unsubstituted lower alkyl, comprising reacting a thioether compound of formula B:



B

wherein R_1 through R_4 are as in formula A, with tert-butyl hydroperoxide in the presence of a catalyst to produce selective oxidation of the thioether compound of formula B to form the thioester compound of formula A, wherein the molar ratio of tert-butyl hydroperoxide to the compound of formula B is in the range of about <u>1.24:1</u> ~~1.34:1~~ to about 4.5:1.

9. (previously presented) The process of claim 8, wherein the catalyst is selected from the group consisting of vanadyl bisacetylacetonate, sodium meta-vanadate and vanadium pentoxide.

10. (canceled)

11. (previously presented) The process of claim 9, wherein the catalyst is vanadyl bis-acetylacetonate.

12. (previously presented) The process of claim 11, wherein the vanadyl bis acetylacetonate and the compound of formula B is in a molar ratio of about 0.01 to about 0.6.

13. (previously presented) The process according to any one of claims 8, 9, 11 and 12, wherein the oxidation is performed in an organic solvent.

14. (original) The process according to claim 13, wherein the organic solvent is selected from the group consisting of toluene, lower alkanols and ethyl acetate.

15. (original) The process according to claim 13, wherein the oxidation is performed in an organic solvent in the presence of water.

16-64. (canceled)